

TOWN MANAGER

Fiscal Year 2011

After serving from 2004 – 2007 as the Town’s Finance Director/Treasurer and from 2007 – 2010 as Assistant Town Manager/Finance Director, I had the tremendous privilege of being asked by the Select Board to serve as Amherst’s next Town Manager, effective October 1, 2010. My very first task was to communicate clear and high expectations to all Town staff in multiple meetings:

- *For the Town to try to be a leader in everything we do;*
- To deliver professional, courteous, and responsive service to the public and each other;
- For department heads to be role models to the rest of the organization and townspeople;
- To be positive, positive, positive;
- To be candid with me about strengths, weaknesses, possible ideas for improvements, and to be problem solvers; and
- To take risks and know that I would back them up.

My transition into the position was aided tremendously by the support from all Town staff. My office staff was incredibly supportive and responsive. Debbie Gordon provided stability as an administrative assistant and Libby Lass from the Conservation and Development Department served temporarily at my request as office manager with great skill and professionalism.

Below is a list of what I think were key highlights over the first nine months of my tenure as Town Manager. Many of these would not have been achieved without the skill and dedication of the Town staff who have embraced my performance expectations, the support and encouragement of the Select Board, and the input from and support of Town Meeting members, the plethora of volunteer Town boards and committees, and the community at large.

- Recruiting an experienced Town Administrator from Hubbardston, Debra Roussel, to the position of Assistant to the Town Manager to serve as my professional office manager and primary staff support to the Select Board;
- Recruiting one of the finest municipal finance professionals in New England and most recently chief administrative officer in Newton, Sanford “Sandy” Pooler, to be our Finance Director. Debra and Sandy made an immediate and positive contribution;
- Town Meeting approval of an ambitious \$4.5 million road improvements bond issue to resurface or reconstruct 10 miles of roads that begins to address a backlog of road repairs while also incorporating pedestrian, cyclist, public transportation, and traffic calming features endorsed by the Public Transportation and Bicycle Committee and Public Works Committee on such streets as Amity, Sunset, McClellan, lower Main, Bay, and Meadow;
- Beginning in November, in partnership with First Baptist Church and our new shelter service provider Milestone Ministries of Springfield, we successfully permitted, opened, and operated the first emergency overnight winter shelter in Amherst. Over 80 homeless individuals were served and no one froze to death on the streets of Amherst this winter;

- Working with school, library, and town administrators and elected officials in the midst of unsettling transitions in the schools and Jones Library to create consensus operating and capital balanced budget plans for Town Meeting despite another half million dollar cut in state aid;
- Securing commitments from the Towns of Belchertown, Hadley, and Pelham to partner with Amherst in the creation of a regional emergency dispatch center that will provide even better service and save Amherst taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars annually; a \$735,000 pre-development grant from the State 911 Department has been extended;
- Achieving overwhelming Town Meeting endorsement of a plan to install a solar power array of up to 4.75 MW at the old landfill with the potential to create substantial environmental and economic benefits to the Town of Amherst by providing our municipal operations with virtually all of its electricity consumption from a clean, renewable solar photovoltaic system; reducing our reliance on fossil fuels – the clean energy produced by the largest possible solar array on that site would be equivalent to planting 150,000 trees or taking 15,000 cars off the road; providing estimated electricity cost savings over the next thirty years and eliminating the risk associated with volatile and unpredictable future energy prices; and generating property tax payments in the hundreds of thousands of dollars over the life of the system; the next step is the creation of a detailed plan that can secure all necessary environmental permits and is responsive to concerns expressed by some abutters.

Respectfully submitted,

John Musante
Town Manager